

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle

In the picturesque countryside of Noggarth, nestled between rolling hills and a meandering river, stood a modern farmhouse that held the echoes of an ancient past. The house, rumored to have been constructed upon the remnants of a grander structure from the thirteenth century, had a fascinating history rooted in the presence of the monks from Kirkstall Abbey.

Long ago, the monks of Kirkstall Abbey had claimed the farm as their own retreat, seeking solace and respite from the demands of their religious lives. These wise men of God had possessed a knack for selecting the most fertile and breathtaking locations for their abbeys, with serene valleys and abundant resources. However, in the present era of industry and progress, such choices were met with amusement and skepticism.

As time moved forward, the affairs of Kirkstall Abbey faced a decline. Debt burdened the once-prosperous institution, and their sources of income were depleted by exorbitant interest payments. Even their livestock had been consumed in their struggle for survival. It was during these challenging times that Abbot Hugh of Kirkstall found himself in London, endeavoring to find a solution to their financial predicament.

On the morrow of St. Martin in the year 1287, Abbot Hugh penned a letter to his beloved brethren at Kirkstall Abbey. Writing from the Castle of Reginald, he chronicled the dire circumstances the abbey faced and the difficulties they encountered in seeking support. Abbot Hugh had approached their patron, the Earl of Lincoln, and beseeched him for assistance.

In his letter, Abbot Hugh enumerated the lands owned by the abbey in Blackbournshire, as well as the additional properties in Roundhay, Schadwell, and Seecroft. These lands, combined with the four pounds they received annually from the exchequer at Pontefract, amounted to a meager sum of £41 17s. 9d. However, the abbot believed that this revenue could be sold for £413 17s. 6d., offering a temporary solution to their financial woes.

Desperate to procure the necessary funds, Abbot Hugh implored his brethren to send money by any means possible, even if it required diverting funds meant for sacred purposes. The abbot's plea reflected their unprecedented destitution and his fervent hope for sustenance while toiling in the vineyard of the Lord.

Eventually, the abbey's financial burdens were alleviated through an agreement with Henry de Lacy. They decided to sell their estates in Blackbournshire, including Extwysell, for a sum equivalent to ten years' worth of revenue. This arrangement provided some respite to Kirkstall Abbey during a time of great uncertainty.

As history unfolded and the era of monasteries came to an end, the Manor of Extwistle passed into the hands of John Braddyl. However, he soon sold the property to the Parkers, a family that would hold ownership of the estate for generations to come.

Thus, the farmhouse in Noggarth, standing upon the remnants of an older structure, continued to witness the passage of time. It served as a testament to the perseverance and resourcefulness of the monks who had once sought refuge in those fertile lands. And although the world had changed, the echoes of their presence lingered, telling a story of devotion and resilience through the ages.

By Donald Jay